Tonality, Symbol, and Structural Levels in Berg’s Wozzeck

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Introduction

ALTHOUGH Berg’s atonal masterwork, the opera Wozzeck, has been studied a good deal in recent years, most authors have not paid much attention to those portions of the music that are presumably tonal; that is, to Variation 5 of Act III, Scene 1, which bears a key signature of four flats and seems to be in F minor, and to the Symphonic Interlude at the end of Act III, Scene 4, which bears a key signature of one flat and is often described as being in D minor.

The present essay, which has as its subject the F-minor variation mentioned above, proceeds from the point of view that the composer’s use of tonal referents in this music is highly significant with respect to the work as a whole and that the music engages in a concise and very special manner certain general questions concerning Berg’s music; that is, the question of musical symbol in this opera and the even more general question of structural levels in his music altogether. The latter is the subject of the final part of this study, which undertakes a tonal as well as an atonal analysis of Variation 5 of Act III, Scene 1 of Wozzeck.

Thema, Part 1

Any study of Wozzeck must recognize the elemental fact that the work is not an abstract instrumental composition, but rather an opera, a fact that is taken into account by those contemporary authors who have written most extensively about this modern masterwork and one that is crucial to the view of musical structure adopted in the present study.\(^1\) Indeed,
in certain ways—in particular, in the emphasis that it places upon musical detail in relation to the persona and the drama—some may regard the study as extreme. I hope, however, to convince the reader that any apparent excesses are wholly justified by the ample musical evidence that the opera provides.

Before taking up the main subject of this essay, Variation 5 of Act III, Scene 1 [III:33-39], I wish to devote a modest portion of it to the Thema from which that variation derives. This will serve three purposes. First, and most obviously, it permits consideration of the content of the Thema in preparation for the analysis of the variation. Second, it provides an opportunity to deal with tonal aspects of the Thema, for it also has not escaped the attention of other observers that the Thema itself might be regarded as an expression of traditional tonal underpinning. Third, it allows for the introduction of basic technical apparatus, primary among which is the nomenclature of pitch-class sets to be used in connection with the discussion of the motivic symbols and other features of the music.

Example 1a represents Part 1 of the Thema in short score in order to display as clearly as possible its motivic components. Here motivic applies not only to pitch configurations that have identical or nearly identical surface characteristics in various parts of the opera, but also to pitch configurations that are expressions of the same pitch-class set, configurations that may differ radically from one another with respect to order, register, rhythm, and other features, yet still retain fundamental properties in common, the most basic of which is, of course, interval content. In addition, the term "motive" also applies to single pitches and even to pitch classes, for it can be demonstrated that certain pitch classes have fixed symbolic associations in the opera, associations either with one or more personae in the drama or with idiomatic circumstances and relations that are basic to the libretto.

2 Locations in Wozzeck are given in shorthand form. A Roman numeral designates Act, the subscript Arabic number specifies scene, and measures are given after the colon.

3 For example, see Perle, pp. 160-61.

4 A pitch-class set may be regarded as a collection of pitches that has been reduced to one of the defined 220 distinct classes and that is represented by the name of the class. For example, pitch-class set 4-14 is the name of a set of four notes that occupies position 14 on a fixed list. The first digit in the set name gives the number of distinct elements the set contains, while the symbols after the hyphen provide information about the position that the set occupies and possibly about its status with respect to a property known as the z-relation. See my The Structure of Atonal Music (New Haven and London, 1973) for more detailed information.

5 This broad definition of motive differs radically from Perle's notion of Leitmotiv, which he describes as "any characteristic musical idea that occurs in more than one scene and that acquires an explicit referential function in the drama through its consistent association with an extra-musical element" (Perle, p. 94). For Perle, a figure qualifies as a Leitmotiv only if it recurs in literally the same or nearly the same form. The present study accepts as equivalent motives any two musical figures, harmonies, etc., that are reducible to the same pitch-class set type, thus recognizing not only equivalencies of the explicit type, but also those that may be more concealed in the musical fabric.
For example, the first two notes in the Thema (Ex. 1a), G and D, comprise a dyadic motive that always refers to Marie and the Tambourmajor [I4:656], while the entrance of the third note of the Thema brings into play a specific pitch-class symbol, the F associated with Wozzeck’s death [III4:220, 297] whose tritonal counterpart, B, is familiar to students of the opera as the sonic symbol of Marie’s murder. Together the three pitches comprise a form of the trichord 3-7, which is contained within two of the principal tetrachords associated with Marie throughout the opera (4-23 and 4-26).  

Ex. 1b

6 The notes G and D are components of the final chord of each act and are especially prominent at the close of Acts I and III. See Berg’s Wozzeck-Vortrag in Hans Redlich, Alban Berg. Versuch einer Würdigung (Vienna, 1957), p. 312, where Berg ascribes a metaphorical tonic function to this eight-note chord (8-24).
The succession of thematic entrances in this first part of the Thema is of considerable interest in itself, as demonstrated in Example 1b, where the two entrances of the G-D-F figure (marked 1 and 2) are followed by G-D-F# (marked 3). In the figure, this replacement of F by F# changes the musical referent from Wozzeck’s death to the Kind, for F# (Gb) is the pitch associated with that persona in the opera [III, 3:373]. The final form of the thematic figure then occurs as A-D (marked 4 in Ex. 1b), and this is the dyad formed by the pitch classes associated with Marie and Wozzeck, respectively. Thus, the progression of motives begins with pitch-class references to the Tambourmajor and Wozzeck’s death (with the explicit inclusion of Wozzeck’s D), comes to a climax on the Kind’s F#, and closes, appropriately, with the fifth that amalgamates Wozzeck and Marie, the primary personae of the opera.

In the motivic orientation of this study, the question of tonality in Part 1 of the Thema assumes a secondary position. While it is certainly true that the sum of the distinct pitch classes in the opening four measures could be understood as an overly endowed G-minor scale (with both raised and lowered sixth degrees and both natural and raised seventh degrees), that description seems relatively inconsequential in light of the motivic organization of the passage as it relates to the opera as a whole. If the first part of the Thema is in some kind of G minor, then the fifth G-D that governs that tonality in the abstract may also be seen to play a prominent role here in the motivic sense as well.

There is, however, an obvious absence of harmonic development here that would qualify as an analogue of traditional tonal unfolding. Instead, we have what appears on the surface to be a relatively static steno treatment of a single idea in successive overlappings—a pictorial representation, if you will, of Marie’s actions as she begins to leaf through the Bible. But with respect to motivic structure, as shown in Example 1a, the passage is very rich and very dynamic, indeed.

In Example 1a, each motive is delimited by a brace and supplied with an upper-case letter that identifies the dramatic association (M for Marie, K for Kind, and so on—see the legend at Ex. 2d, p. 488). Preceding this upper-case letter is a lower-case letter followed by a colon, and that small letter is a key to the list of pitch-class sets below the example. There the sets are identified by conventional set names. For each of these sets I have also supplied one location in the work where it occurs prominently, so that the reader has some assurance that the occurrence of the motive here is not an isolated instance.

Motive b (Ex. 1a), the continuation in the solo viola of the figure G-D-F discussed in connection with Example 1b, is a form of the tetrachord that first appears in an explicit thematic role as the Hauptstimme of measures I, 656-58,
at the beginning of the *Verwandlung* that precedes the scene devoted to Marie and the Tambourmajor. This tetrachord belongs to set class 4-22, an entity of diatonic persuasion which here comprises a segment of our "G-minor scale." Motive c, which consists of the two vertical fifths G-D and B♭-F, belongs to yet another class of motivic tetrachord, 4-26, a musical symbol of Marie which, like 4-22, has a diatonic as well as a nontonal incarnation. What is remarkable here is the way in which it appears as the counterpart between the *dux* and the *comes*; its constituent fifths (G-D and B♭-F) are themselves motivic, with G-D depicting Marie with the Tambourmajor, while the dyad B♭-F refers throughout the work to the head notes of the Lullaby [I₃:372]—although its general function in the musical-dramatic scheme is quite different here. Continuation of the second entrance of the head motive, in solo cello and violin, creates still another tetrachord, marked d in Example 1a, a form of the symmetric set 4-10 and a motivic structure belonging to the Hauptmann. The third entrance of the head motive (Clarinet) brings in the special pitch F♯, which is emblematic of the Kind, as remarked above. The next pitch event, A (Flute and Horn), completes the tetrachordal symbol of the Kind in the opera, pitch-class set 4-14, a formation which is prominent as a diatonic component of the Symphonic Interlude that precedes the last scene of the opera, which reappears at the beginning of that scene [III₄:372, "Ringel, Ringel, Rosenkranz"], but which has occurred several times earlier in association with the persona of the Kind [II₁:79 (followed by 4-8, also denoting the Kind) and II₃:412-13, as D-F♯-A-G in the accompaniment (5-z17) against 4-8 in the theme].

As the clarinet arrives on F♯ in measure 6 of the *Thema*, it forms a tetrachord in the vertical dimension with the sustained parts below it, a motivic set labeled f in Example 1a. The set is 4-12, whose primary association is with Marie's submission during the seduction scene.⁷ Here we have an instance—one of a very large number in the opera—in which a vertical harmony determined by linear motion derives its musical meaning from the pitch-dramatic associations that are developed in the course of the work.⁸

The striking final chord of this first part of the *Thema* has been the subject of comment. For example, Carner characterizes it as "... a bitonal chord (D major and the Neapolitan E-flat major) ..."⁹ Designated by the

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⁷ Its secondary referent, which has interesting implications for Berg's interpretation of the drama, is the Doktor, specifically the "fixe Idee" which the Doktor attributes to Wozzeck in I₄:566-67 and 618, but which, of course, belongs to him. Set 4-12 is one of the tetrachords of 6-21, which underlies the Doktor's famous "Oh! meine Theorie!" aria of Variation 20 of the passacaglia (I₄:620-23), where it occurs as the metrically accented pitches D♯-C♯-A-C.

⁸ I refer the reader to Schmalfeldt for an extended and incisive treatment of the musical-dramatic network within which these relations operate.

letter g in Example 1a, the chord is identified in the table below the example as 6-z19, the primary sonic reference to Wozzeck and Marie together.\textsuperscript{10} It is also one of Berg's biographical references, since this hexachord is the complement of Arnold Schoenberg's musical signature, 6-z44.\textsuperscript{11} The motivic significance of the chord can be appreciated with the aid of Example 1c, which dissects this vertical formation in some detail.

Ex. 1c

Let us consider, first, the two intersecting five-note groups that obtain from bottom and top (marked by brackets in Ex. 1c). In one of its forms the lower of these, 5-21, is Perle's "Marie as mother" Leitmotiv,\textsuperscript{12} while the upper is 5-22, a prominent motive set that refers to Marie and Wozzeck.\textsuperscript{13}

The three ordered vertical tetrachords of 6-z19 in Example 1c are identified there—from the top down—as 4-18, Marie's principal tetrachord, 4-19, the "Wir arme Leut" tetrachord, and 4-20, another of Marie's tetrachords, strongly associated with her role as mother, as in I\textsubscript{3}:372.\textsuperscript{14}

Finally, the constituent dyads of the 6-z19 sonority are motivically significant: G-A always refers to Marie and the Tambourmajor in the opera; B\textsubscript{b}-F\# designates Marie and the Kind; and D-E\textsubscript{b}, the central dyad, combines Wozzeck and the Doktor. More specifically, as the first pitch of the Doktor's Passacaglia [I\textsubscript{4}:486], E\textsubscript{b}, the pitch a half step above Wozzeck's D, is reserved

\textsuperscript{10} See Schmalfeldt, pp. 96, 183 ff.

\textsuperscript{11} See my "Schoenberg's Creative Evolution: The Path to Atonality," The Musical Quarterly, LXIV/2 (April, 1978), 133-76, for an explanation of the role of 6-z44 in Schoenberg's atonal music.

\textsuperscript{12} See Perle, p. 101, Leitmotiv No. 7. However, set 5-21 appears to relate much more strongly to Marie and Wozzeck together, since it is contained within both 6-z19 and 6-z44, the complementary hexachordal pair that is so fundamental to the pitch structure of the opera. See Schmalfeldt, Chap. 5, and n. 11 above.

\textsuperscript{13} See Schmalfeldt, p. 157, Ex. 57, pp. 187 ff. Sets 5-22 and 5-21 (note 12) are the only pentads both in 6-z19 and in 6-z44.

\textsuperscript{14} The "Wir arme Leut" motive, the motto of the opera [I\textsubscript{1}:136] is strongly implied by the succession on E\textsubscript{b}-G in the viola, m. 4, since those pitches form the boundaries of the motive in its original form. In this work in general, boundary pitches of specific figures are of signal importance.
for the submissive posture that Wozzeck exhibits toward the Doktor, while D♭ ("Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann," I₁:25f), the pitch a half step below D, symbolizes the suppressive relationship that the Hauptmann bears to the protagonist. Wozzeck's D is expressed strategically within the opera, in the early part of the work perhaps most effectively with the entrance of the protagonist at I₃:427-28, where it is the last and sustained note of the rapid figure that accompanies his knock on the door and as part of the "Der Mann!" gesture E-D that Marie sings after he leaves [I₃:456].

In sum, while the vertical sonority that terminates the first part of the Thema may be regarded as some arbitrary tonalistic combination of D major and "Neapolitan"—although it looks, in fact, more like a juxtaposition of diminished triad and minor triad!—the primary raison d'être of the chord appears to be more effectively explained in terms of the musical material of the opera, a point that Schmalfeldt makes, in a somewhat different way, in her discussion. The main point I wish to make here is that the musical symbol, the motive broadly conceived, is primary. I will attempt to show that it plays a similarly determinative role in the unusual F-minor variation.

Thema, Part 2

The second part of the Thema, although consisting of only three measures, is far more complex than the first, and here again, as in the case of Part 1, an incomplete motivic analysis will have to suffice. Let us begin with the lowest voice (Ex. 1d), since this component has attracted a good deal of attention from contemporary writers because it can be construed as a twelve-tone series, as can the Passacaglia theme in I₄. The motivic significance of the twelve-tone series can be read from the illustration, Example 1e, a representation in ordinary letter-name notation of the pitches shown in the bass part of the short score, Example 1d. Compared with adjacent trichordal, pentachordal, and hexachordal segmentations, the tetrachordal parsing provides the most convincing and complete picture of motivic constituents—although two tetrachords formed by adjacent notes (4-6 and 4-2) are enclosed in brackets since they are not indigenous to this work. In this picture I have given pitch-class set names first, followed by the now-familiar abbreviations showing primary dramatic associations. Thus, 4-3 is the symmetric tetrachord that depicts Marie and

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15 See Schmalfeldt, p. 141.
16 The numerological aspect of the Thema and its variations has been observed by many students of Wozzeck. Suffice it to say here that the magical prime number 7, which is predominant in the music at this point, relates directly to Wozzeck as the number of letters in his name.
Ex. Id

Marie
Violin
Clarinet
Trumpet
Bassoon
Cello
Bass

a: 4-3 Marie and Kind
g: 5-28 Hauptmann
b: 3-1 Marie's fear
h: 4-26 Marie
c: 7-1 Marie's fear
i: 4-20 Marie
d: 4-16 Marie's fate
j: 4-z29 Doktor
e: 4-23 Marie/Folk idiom
k: 5-22 Marie and Wozzeck
f: 4-14 Kind
l: 6-z17 Doktor

Alban Berg-Wozzeck
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481
Ex. 1e. Tetrachords of the twelve-note Series in the *Thema*

the Kind, a tetrachord that comprises two forms of the trichord 3-3, the hallmark of the Kind throughout, as in “Komm, mein Bub!” at I₃:364. Set 4-12 represents Marie’s submission, as remarked above; set 4-1 is an abbreviated form of Marie’s fear (Perle’s “Knife Leitmotiv”); set 4-10, the Hauptmann’s collection, occurred prominently in Part I of the *Thema*; set 4-18 is the primary tetrachord relating to motives that evoke Marie’s complex role in the opera; and 4-14, as noted before, is the set assigned predominantly to the Kind in the opera.¹⁸

Of the remaining motivic constituents of Part 2 of the *Thema* shown in Example 1d, those in the voice part and in the Hauptstimme of the instrumental parts require brief comments. The supplicatory phrase “Herr Gott” is set by F-E and A♭-G, two dyads that will return—pitch class specific—in Variation 5, where they take on special significance in the tonal setting. The set, as noted above, is 4-3, which embodies the relation between Marie and the Kind. The second vocal phrase, “Sieh mich nicht an,” is expressed by a form of 4-16 [I₃:425-26], the pitch classes of which have special meaning: the components of the central dyad, C-F♯, refer to Marie and the Kind, respectively, while the components of the outer dyad, F-B♭, refer directly to the Lullaby melody I₁:372, as remarked above. The contour of the motive, of course, is that of its “Wir arme Leut” form, the motto of the work as a whole that first appears in Wozzeck’s aria, I₁:136. Because some of the pitch class-character associations mentioned in this study

¹⁸ The twelve-note row here deserves more attention than I have given it. For example, in Variation 7, the segmentation of the row into dyads further divides it into two hexachords, one consisting of the first notes of the dyads, the other of the second notes. These hexachords are of class 6-21, a motivic symbol associated with the Doktor. In order to achieve this correspondence, the order of the pitch classes of the first dyad is reversed. See n. 7.
(in particular, C, D, and A♭) are probably unfamiliar to the reader, since they are not mentioned in any of the published studies of the opera, I will digress a moment here (and elsewhere, as required) to cite locations at which the pitch class is established in the work. At II₁:64, in a reflective passage, C is the headnote of the line sung by Marie to the text word "Unsereins," which is connected semantically to the "Wir arme Leut" idea. Here, as at the beginning of the following vocal phrase, C is followed immediately by B. Then at II₁:116-27, C is the predominant note, in the context of a C-major triad, a tonal reference that is recalled at the end of the scene, II₁:170, by the C-major scale. The dyad C-B, however, is also associated with the Doktor [II₂:172, 178], which suggests that a caveat is in order concerning absolutely fixed associations for every pitch class, although primary associations are clear-cut in almost every case.

As part of the Hauptstimme the Eb clarinets in measure 8 (Ex. 1d) play a contraction of the form of 4-16 sung by Marie which I just pointed out: F-C-F♯-B♭. The remainder of the Hauptstimme for this second part of the Thema consists of two dyads: C-B played by first violins and E-F♯ played as a trill by Eb clarinets. Both dyads recur in Variation 5, again, as in the case of A♭-G and F-E, with special highlighting in that tonal setting. Together these two dyads comprise 4-16, a transposition at the tritone of the form of that set in the voice, measure 8 (and in Eb clarinets as well). Set 4-16 has a special role in the opera: it represents Marie's fate, as depicted by her attitude of "waiting for the indefinite" (described by Berg in his lecture on Wozzeck as "das ins Unbestimmte hinziehende Warten"). This is particularly clear in I₁:422-23 where the set results from a voice-leading change of one pitch, as shown below:

\[
\begin{align*}
E & \quad E \\
C & \quad B \\
A & \quad A \\
F & \quad F \\
4-20 & \quad 4-16
\end{align*}
\]

Here the change in harmony involves the pitch classes C and B, in that order, precisely the first dyadic component of 4-16 in the Hauptstimme of Part 2 of the Thema, as described above.¹⁹ The other harmony here, 4-20, is also a Marie set (see Ex. 2e).

¹⁹ For connoisseurs of autobiographical references in Wozzeck, I note that the upper trichord of 4-16 here is 3-9, the seduction motive, which here (and elsewhere in the work) has a pitch form that encodes the musical letters of the name of the person to whom the opera is dedicated—Alma Maria Mahler. For another instance see I₁:32-33, where the Hauptmann sings "Ewigkeit" on B-A-E.
Variation 5

The strategy to be adopted for the analysis of the variation is twofold. First, I shall present a relatively straightforward tonal analysis using quasi-Schenkerian notation. Then I shall adopt the position that the variation is atonal and deal with its atonal motivic constituents. Finally, I shall suggest ways in which the two apparently conflicting readings might be reconciled.

I have omitted the *Sprechstimme* from the pitch-based analyses. Even if one were to regard it as a representation of pitched sounds, its inclusion would provide no additional information about the structure because the *Sprechstimme* duplicates the pitch-content of the instruments, albeit sometimes in different melodic configurations.20

Examples 2a and 2b (see pp. 485 and 486) are graphic analytical representations of the music of Variation 5 that demonstrate in some detail that the variation is an integral tonal composition, replete with the chromatic embellishments so characteristic of late nineteenth-century music and clearly reminiscent of Schoenberg of the *Acht Lieder für eine Singstimme und Klavier*, Opus 6, Mahler of the Third Symphony, and, of course, Berg of the *Sonate für Klavier*, Opus 1.

Granted that some of these surface features, such as the bass motion C-F♯ in the introductory section in measures 31-32 and the incomplete chromatic lower neighbor note B in the descant of measure 34, do not accord with textbook paradigms. Yet the main melodic gestures are clearly derivative of musical ideas that will sound familiar to all who know music of the late Romantic period, among whom, of course, were the composer's first audiences. Particularly striking is the climactic suspended C in the descant of measure 38 that resolves over embellishing chromatic motions in the inner voices. The note of resolution itself, B, is then decorated by a chromatic motion that spans a descending third. In measure 39 we hear the melodic counterpart of this melodic motion C-B, the appoggiatura figure F♯-E. Both figures are supported by basic harmonic events: C-B occurring over the applied dominant to V and F♯-E over V itself.

Although this variation's relation to the *Thema* is clearer than that of several in the set, a few words of explanation will be helpful.21 The main connections—at least from the traditional tonal view I have adopted

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20 The "different melodic configurations" are, of course, often motives in the opera, from which it may be concluded that the *Sprechstimme* was originally conceived—as is the case with *Pierrot Lunaire*—as a pitched component. In this connection it is worth mentioning that the composer marks the part of Marie in the opening section of the fugue that follows the last variation "mit etwas Gesangstimme" ("with somewhat of a sung voice") and uses a new notation for the *Sprechstimme*: a single stroke through the note stem. Here the voice intones the first fugue subject.

21 In general, the relation of these free variations to the *Thema* is a complex one that cannot be described in a concise way.
Berg's Wozzeck
here—are melodic, and all are stated in the *Hauptstimme*. These consist of the initial six-note melodic figure of the *Thema*, which the horn plays beginning on the inner-voice F in measure 33 and extending to the end of measure 34. In measure 35 violins take up the form of the head motive of the *Thema*, numbered 3 in Example 1b (there G-D-F♯; here F-C-E), expand it with embellishing motions, then ascend to the climactic C in measure 38, which corresponds to the beginning of Part 2 of the *Thema*. In this section the primary melodic motives are those mentioned above, C-B and F♯-E, which are *pitch-specific* repetitions of the *Hauptstimme*’s figures in Part 2 of the *Thema* (Ex. 1d). Here pitch-specific is emphasized since this variation is not in the original “G minor.” The significance of this as well as the choice of key for the variation and a number of details cannot be effectively approached solely in terms of a general tonal analysis such as the one undertaken here.

The tonal analysis (Exx. 2a and 2b) does have the advantage, however, of showing the overall organization of the variation and making clear its linear and harmonic continuities. In the harmonic domain we see that the variation is circumscribed by the tonic triads in measures 33 and 40. From measures 35 to 37 there is a strong motion away from the tonic to the triad on scale degree VI (D♭) that negotiates the bass chromatic passing tones E and E♭. Upon arrival at VI the approach to the climax on the motive C-B begins above bass F♯, a note whose destination, G, is determined by the tonal setting. Bass G then serves as the foundation for the applied dominant harmony that leads to the fundamental dominant C in measure 39. The latter, in turn, reasserts the tonic triad, whose reappearance coincides with the beginning of Variation 6.

Example 2b, a further reduction of the graph shown in Example 2a, displays a simpler outline of the linear and harmonic structure of the variation while at the same time refining one or two of the motions sketched in Example 2a. For instance, the continuity of voice-leading in the upper voices of measures 38-40 (Part 2 of the *Thema*) is explained by two unfoldings: from B of the first thematic motive inward to inner-voice D and from E inward to inner-voice B♭. The B♭, which should obey the textbook rule concerning descending minor sevenths within a dominant harmony, returns instead to C via B—an apparent anomaly for which the atonal analysis below provides an explanation.

Examples 2c and 2d (see pp. 488 and 489) present atonal readings of the variation. With respect to basic pitch representation, they correspond essentially to Examples 2a and 2b, respectively. Here beams are used to identify components of sets; they do not connect middleground linear progressions or other Schenkerian formulations. The motivic significance of sets marked on the two graphs can be ascertained by consulting the

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Berg’s *Wozzeck* 487
Ex. 2e. Table of Motivic Sets and Associations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>Marie’s fear; Hauptmann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-3</td>
<td>Marie and Kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>Kind; Ländler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10</td>
<td>Hauptmann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-12</td>
<td>Marie’s submission; <em>fixe Idee</em> of Doktor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-14</td>
<td>Kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-z15 (4-z15)</td>
<td>Doktor; Hauptmann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-16</td>
<td>Marie’s fate: “waiting for the indefinite”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-18</td>
<td>Marie’s principal tetrachord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-19</td>
<td>Motto of the opera; Wozzeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-20</td>
<td>Marie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-22</td>
<td>Marie and Tambourmajor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-23</td>
<td>Marie; folk idiom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-24</td>
<td>Wozzeck’s fate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-26</td>
<td>Marie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-z29</td>
<td>Doktor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-z17/5-z37</td>
<td>Wozzeck’s hallucinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-z18</td>
<td>Tambourmajor (his main pentad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-19/7-19</td>
<td>Wozzeck’s hallucinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-20</td>
<td>First chord in <em>Wozzeck</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-21</td>
<td>Wozzeck; Marie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-22/7-22</td>
<td>Marie and Wozzeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-26</td>
<td>Earrings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-28</td>
<td>Wozzeck; Hauptmann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-30/7-30</td>
<td>Wozzeck’s madness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-31</td>
<td>Marie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-35</td>
<td>Folk idiom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-z17</td>
<td>Doktor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-z19/6-z44</td>
<td>Wozzeck and Marie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-31</td>
<td>Omnibus hexachord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-34</td>
<td>Wozzeck’s principal hexachord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
table given in Example 2e (see p. 490), a listing that is restricted to motivic sets that occur in the variation, not a listing of the harmonic vocabulary of the entire opera.  

I include in Example 2c the last two measures of atonal Variation 4 to show how the tonal music of Variation 5 is approached. In the tonal analysis (Ex. 2a) this music presents the dominant harmony of the upcoming F minor key. The atonal analysis (Ex. 2c), on the other hand, shows the motivic sets that comprise this transitional music. Above bass C in measure 31 are two sets that are formed by upper neighbor-note constellations together with the pitches to which they resolve. Of these the upper is the tetrachord 4-8, which is emblematic of the Kind [II₁:29-31, II₂:80] and which is prominent elsewhere, notably in II₄:443, where it informs the head motive of the Ländler (first heard at the beginning of the Verwandlung, II₃:412). The lower tetrachord is of set class 4-19, the motto of the entire opera.  

Both tetrachords occur within 5-22, a pentad that represents Marie and Wozzeck together. When F♯ enters in the bass it forms hexachord 6-z17, a sonority that symbolizes the Doktor (I₄:486, the first hexachord in the passacaglia subject). Moreover, the bass succession C-F♯ (marked x in Ex. 2c) represents Marie and the Kind, so that F♯, the unorthodox component, can now be seen to have an integral motivic function in the passage. It also contributes to the next segment of the transition, where it is a component of the large set 8-z15, the complement of which, 4-z15, is a set associated with the Doktor, whose megalomaniac behavior impinges with disastrous effect upon Wozzeck, hence upon Marie and the Kind, the subjects in the foreground of the present scene.

The principal tetrachords of the variation are 4-3, 4-12, 4-14, and 4-22, all of which are directly related to Marie, to the Kind, or to both. Set 4-3, which represents the Kind and Marie, occurs but once in the melodic Hauptstimme, in measure 37. However, it occurs in the supporting texture at the very outset in measure 33, as a "double suspension" with its resolution. In both locations it is pitch-class specific with respect to the vocal setting of the text "Herr Gott, Herr Gott" in measures 7-8 of the Thema, suggesting the primacy of pitch-class set over context in the composer's conception.

In measure 33, 4-3 occurs within 5-z17, the main pentachord that symbolizes Wozzeck's hallucinations and the first of the three chords that underlie most of the music of I₁.  

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22 For a list of virtually the entire vocabulary of sets in Wozzeck see Schmalfeldt, p. 235, Table 1.  
23 Berg's predilection for this set is apparent as early as the Sonate für Klavier, Op. 1 (1907-8), where it occurs prominently as the succession F♯-G-Eb-B in the initial melody of the first theme.  
24 The "Herr Gott" figure here is pitch specific with respect to the occurrence of its motivic set, 4-3, in I₃:468, where it sets the text "Ach! Wir armen [Leut]."  
25 This chord, which occurs many times and in many situations in the opera, first appears in I₂:201, where it is a transposed and reordered replica of the "Farben" chord at the beginning of the third movement of Schoenberg's Five Orchestral Pieces, Op. 16.
Vertical set 4-14, which also occurs within 5-z17 here, occurs three times in the foreground of the Hauptstimme, once in measure 35 and again in measures 37 and 38, as can be seen from Example 2c. In measure 35 it comprises the skip from F to C followed by the upper and lower neighbor notes to F, while in measure 38 it forms part of the melodic line that descends from the climactic C of measure 38. On the downbeat of measure 38 it again appears as part of the "hallucinatory" sonority, 5-z17, constituting one of the less obvious musical ways in which the Kind is associated with Wozzeck during this narrative variation.\footnote{The text here is a distorted and despondent "fairy tale" that Marie relates to the Kind. See Carner, p. 206 and Perle, p. 79.}

The first melodic phrase of the Hauptstimme, which is the counterpart of the first phrase in the Thema, contains the last of the four tetrachords listed above, set 4-22, a motivic set emblematic of Marie and the Tambour-major that here symbolizes Marie's subconscious reflection upon that relationship, perhaps with respect to the fate of her child. In the Hauptstimme of measure 35, sets 4-14 and 4-22 intersect on G, a member of a pitch class first emphatically introduced in the Verwandlung that precedes the appearance of the Tambourmajor \(I_2:656\) and connected with him throughout. Set 4-14 then appears in measure 37, intersecting with 4-3 in its "Herr Gott" form just before the climactic upward sweep to C. In this context both 4-3 and 4-14 are within 5-z17 (as E-G-F-Ab-C), still another reference to the pervasive influence of Wozzeck's hallucinations.

Let us consider now the approach to the melodic climax whose arrival signals the beginning of Part 2 of the variation. This begins at the end of measure 37 with the ascending tetrachord D-E♭-F♯-C, tetrachord 4-12, which is the tetrachord of Marie’s submission in the seduction scene (see \(I_2:708\)). Its parallel-motion counterpoint, as indicated by the Nebenstimme signs in the score, is not a casual subordinate voice, but forms motivic tetrachord 4-3 twice, once in the melodic succession and once as the sum of successive dyads. In the lower part the dyad C-F♯ accompanies this upward surge, forming the tritone (marked X on the graph) that designates Marie and the Kind, as noted above. Set 4-12 is formed again as the vertical at the end of measure 35, just as the bass begins to descend toward D♭. Here it occurs within the pentad 5-26, which is the basis of the first phrase of the sonata form at \(II_1:6-9\) and which subsequently appears as the motivic set from the "earrings" scene, \(II_1:105-6\). Set 5-21, symbolizing Marie and Wozzeck (see note 12), succeeds set 5-26 immediately, so that both harmonic components of the progression refer to relations and events that are critical to the dramatic role of Marie in the opera. (Set 4-12 occurs again in the twelve-tone row, which is discussed below.)
Returning to the *Hauptstimme*, we see that from the climactic pitch C in measure 38, the melody proceeds downward, ultimately arriving on B♭ in measure 39. Over this intricate trajectory it forms an eight-note set, which proves to be 8-22, the complement of 4-22 discussed above. To sum up, the final portion of the *Hauptstimme* in its overall contour is a large-scale melodic reference to the relation between Marie, the only figure on the stage at this time, and the immediate cause of her undoing, the Tambourmajor. In the foreground this motion incorporates set 4-14, the Kind, and as can be seen in Example 2d, other tetrachordal associations exist just below the surface.

I have mentioned the reference to Wozzeck and Marie through set 5-22 in the transitional music preceding Variation 5. The primary hexachord representing that relation, 6-z19 (or its complement, 6-z44), appears in the same context, within 8-z15 in measure 32, as Example 2c shows. Set 6-z19 occurs at the other end of the variation as well, in measure 40, where it comprises the suspension and resolution complex that begins the next variation. However, I have not yet pointed out the occurrence of 6-34, the hexachord that is associated exclusively with the protagonist. This includes all the pitches in measure 34 beginning with D♭ in the lower parts, a pitch which signifies Wozzeck's submission to the Hauptmann and which here, with a most remarkable effect, coincides with B in the descant, the pitch class that represents the murder. The anomalous B as incomplete lower neighbor note in our tonal analysis thus proves to be motivically and dramatically logical in the context in which it occurs in the atonal set analysis. Moreover, B, together with the voice a third below, is the headnote of a form of 4-12, representing, as will be recalled, the submission of Marie to the Tambourmajor. In this way, between 4-12 and the single pitch D♭, both representing submission, there is created a subtle dramatic parallel that is expressed entirely in terms of harmonic motives first developed on the surface of the musical texture.

The intricate chain of relations does not end here, however, for 4-12 is but part of a larger melodic formation that expresses set 5-z18 (see Ex. 2c, end of m. 33), the pentad that belongs to the Tambourmajor. And both 5-z18 and 6-34 (Tambourmajor and Wozzeck) are within the seven-note set labeled 7-30, representing Wozzeck's madness, most often in the form of its five-note complement, 5-30. (See I₃:427.) In sum, the persona of Wozzeck metaphorically encloses those of two other central figures in the opera in this harmonic context.

Other pitch-class sets marked in Example 2c may be pursued by the interested reader, and details that I have neglected may attract attention—for

Schmalfeldt states (p. 226) that "... 6-z19 and 6-z44 provide pitch-structural correspondents for the fatal bond between the two leading characters."
example, the *Nebenstimme*’s horn trill that begins on the downbeat of measure 37: a statement of the dyad (Db-E♭) that symbolizes the relation of the Doktor and the Hauptmann to Wozzeck.

The presentation of a twelve-tone row within this tonal-atonal structure makes it a most unusual hybrid. With Perle, I see the series as beginning on G♭. However, I interpret the role of the series differently, as shown in Example 2c. The series begins on G♭ (m. 38, lower stave) in the middle of a descending chromatic progression that creates successive forms of the motivic set 4-3 (see Ex. 2c). Assuming, therefore, that the row itself has something to do with that tetrachord, the analysis shows that the “Herr Gott” form of 4-3 in the row is interrupted by G♭, the first note of the series. The series then continues on F, without further interruption, and is made up of tetrachords 4-3, 4-12, and 4-14, three of the most prominent motivic sets in the variation. The final note of the series, E, which is omitted from this analysis of tetrachords, plays a special role: in the tonal setting it is the leading tone that will resolve upward to the tonic note at the beginning of Variation 6 (m. 40); in the atonal context it is a component of 4-18 (B♭-E-G-B), Marie’s tetrachord, within 5-238 (C-B♮-E-G-B), which is one of Wozzeck’s hallucinatory sonorities. The twelve-tone row is therefore seen to be not merely an arbitrary arrangement of the total chromatic, but an integral component of the atonal motivic fabric.

Certain features of the tetrachordal parsing require comment before going on. Notice that the first two tetrachords, 4-3 and 4-12, share three notes, namely, F, A, and A♭, which combine to form 3-3, the trichord emblematic of the Kind. The second two tetrachords, 4-12 and 4-14, share a single pitch, G, a member of the pitch class associated with the Tambour-major. The latter structure is reminiscent of the connection between 4-14 and 4-22 in the *Hauptstimme* of measures 35-36 pointed out above.

Example 2d takes the atonal analysis of Example 2c several steps further and should be regarded as experimental in nature, since to the best of my knowledge there are no published studies that approach the general notion of structural levels in Berg’s atonal music in precisely this way.

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18 See Perle, p. 166, for a list of the forms of the series in each variation.

19 The embedding of the row here within “extraneous” pitches has a precedent in the first variation of the passacaglia theme (I.4:496-503), where the notes of the series are prolonged by what from the standpoint of modern twelve-tone theory might be regarded as arbitrary intrusions but which are motivic sets of the opera: 4-18, 4-12, and 5-28.

30 It will be apparent to the reader at this point that I do not deal with questions of progression and continuity within the atonal structures. These important considerations are not essential to the central focus of this essay.

31 Schmalfeldt invokes set-complex theory and therefore the concept of an abstract hierarchy of relations. She also shows examples in which non-contiguous elements form motivic sets—e.g., 4-19 in her Ex. 31, p. 101. However, what I mean by structural levels here is the more immediate interaction of various structural spans over a long, complete musical unit (here a variation) in a quasi-Schenkerian sense.
Berg’s *Wozzeck* 495

In the first variation of the passacaglia, I₄:496-503, Berg himself provided a compositional prototype for the analytical reductions displayed in Example 2d. In that variation the first, second, fifth, and sixth notes of the row as presented by the Doktor have attached to them pitches that are not part of the series. Analysis reveals that these extraneous elements are not arbitrary but comprise motivic sets in *Wozzeck* (see note 29), as do the ordered subcollections of the row itself, in a manner similar to that discussed above in connection with the twelve-note series in the *Thema* (Ex. 1e). In addition to this example, there are many instances in *Wozzeck* of linear structures spanned out over long segments of music that are interrupted by events that occur between the statements of successive elements of the basic structure. The most extreme and literal example of this is the occasional interruption of a linear structure consisting of one element, the pedal B that underlies III₁.

The reductive procedure used to derive Example 2d from Example 2c does not follow general rules—such as those based upon voice-leading that are available to the analyst of tonal music—but is based upon contextual criteria that depend upon cues provided in the local situation as well as an understanding of the motivic components of the opera as a whole, many of which are familiar to the reader. Thus, set 4-8 is formed in the descant by the head motive C-B of measures 33-34 and the corresponding half-step motive F-E in the succeeding melodic phrase. Here C in the skip below F is omitted (somewhat in the manner of a consonant skip in tonal analysis) just as it was in the head motive of measures 33-34: F-C-E♭, revealing the motivic set 4-22. The descant of measure 37, beats 1 through 3, is a reduction of the configuration in the descant of the entire previous measure; that is, set 4-3, the “Herr Gott” motive. The sum of the components of the descant in measures 34-36 then proves to be 6-z19, itself a highly charged motivic set in the opera, representing the relation between the two main characters, Wozzeck and Marie. (See note 27.) The bass over this span of music is reduced very little. Only the “chromatic passing tone” E between F and D♭ is omitted.

The descant of measures 38-40 offers more alternatives for reduction. I have selected what seems to be the simplest: omitting the chromatic notes between B, the second note of the C-B motive, and D to reveal motivic set 4-14 (Kind) as the underlying formation. However, selection of any one of the three chromatic notes (themselves forming motivic trichord 3-1) while omitting the others will produce a motivic set: if B♭ is selected, set 4-22 is revealed; if A is selected, motivic set 4-23 emerges. From measure 39 the head motive F♯-E is understood to connect downward to B♭, across D. B♭ then ascends to B, completing the motivic tetrachord 4-16, which is prominent among these melodic structures.
The complete array of sets resulting from the reduction is shown in Example 2d. All are motivic, beginning with the total configuration, which is a representation of 7-30, symbolic of Wozzeck's madness. The central part of the succession, beginning and ending on B, consists of hexachord 6-31, which may be designated the "omnibus hexachord" of the opera because of its multiple associations.\(^{32}\) For example, it contains both 4-16 and 4-20, tetrachords associated with Marie, 4-18, Marie's principal hexachord, 4-19, the "Wir arme Leut" tetrachord that often denotes the protagonist, and 4-24, which is symbolic of his destiny. Three of these are contiguous formations within 6-31 in Example 2d: 4-20 as B-G-D-F\(^\sharp\), 4-24 as D-F\(^\sharp\)-E-B\(^\flat\), and 4-16 as F\(^\sharp\)-E-B\(^\flat\)-B. Nested within 6-31 is the pentachord 5-26, the "earrings" motive (G-D-F\(^\sharp\)-E-B\(^\flat\)), which is, of course, a highly significant musical symbol in the context of Marie's ruminations about her sins and her child.

The final hexachord in this structure is 6-22, the set that begins on D and ends on C. Here sets 6-31 and 6-22 share two motivic tetrachords: 4-16, Marie's fate, and 4-24, Wozzeck's fate. As mentioned above, the first tetrachord, beginning on C, is 4-14, representing the Kind, while the second, beginning on B, is 4-20, representing Marie's aimlessness. To sum up, virtually every linearly contiguous subset of 7-30 in this melodic structure, which spans Part 2 of the variation, is motivic.

Of the other hexachords shown in the reduced version at Example 2d, I have already pointed out 6-z19 in measures 34-36. Set 6-31, notated as a composite of the "Db triad" and the "diminished triad" (m. 31), is a harmony whose role in the opera Jarman very strongly emphasizes, labeling it "cadential chord A."\(^{33}\) Perhaps of greater immediate importance in this context is the upper-voice motion F-C (marked w), since this is the most direct melodic expression of that basic structural interval in Part 1 of the variation.

The significance of tetrachord 4-16 at the middleground level of structure is nowhere more strongly indicated than in the bass: it results precisely from the primary harmonic points I-VI-V-I shown in the tonal analysis, Example 2a. The reader will recall that it is the musical symbol of Marie's fate. In its most trenchant form [I\(_3\):425] it includes the ominous dyad F-B, which incorporates the fates of both Marie and of Wozzeck. This tritonal dyad, which both Perle and Schmalfeldt stress in their studies of the opera, appears in the middleground structure as motive X in Example 2d, first joining the two halves of 4-8 and then again at the end of the variation, where, taken in its tonal context, it forms the augmented fourth within

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\(^{32}\) With regard to this hexachord, Schmalfeldt writes of the "wealth of inclusion relations, in sharp distinction to the dearth of discrete, thematically prominent appearances ..." (p. 237).

the applied dominant seventh to the dominant seventh. A more exhaustive presentation of pitch-class designations is given below.

Variation 5, with its recitative-like vocal part (only Variations 1 and 5 are entirely in Sprechstimme), resembles the music between scenes in the opera—the Verwandlungen—in that it is condensed and highly charged with motivic significance, lacking the more discursive character of some of the longer scenes. Perhaps the reason for this focused quality is the chronological position of the scene in the opera as the immediate predecessor of the murder scene, the climax of the entire drama. However this may be, the variation, in its dual manifestation as tonal and atonal music, so clearly presents in its melodic contours many of the symbolic pitch classes of the work that it might be taken as a model for that aspect of the composition. The display of alphabetic characters provided below Example 2d is intended to demonstrate this feature of Wozzeck.

I begin with the descant. In the tonal reading over Part 1 of the variation this is essentially an embellishment of the fundamental interval C-F of the F-minor triad, the third of which (A♭) also plays a role. In terms of pitch-class references, the dyad C-B at the outset points to Marie and her fate, in that order. (A complete list of the abbreviations used here is explained in the accompanying Legend.) Thus, as noted above, the unusual (with respect to norms of traditional tonality) incomplete lower neighbor note B has its own logic. To its placement within a meaningful atonal context we now add its function as a fixed pitch-class reference in the work. The focal pitch of the next melodic group in the upper voice is F, representing Wozzeck’s fate, and this is embellished by the turn figure, which incorporates the neighbor notes E and G, as indicated. The descant of Part 1, in this middleground representation, ends as it began, on C, a reference to the central persona of the scene.

The fixed pitch references of the descant of Part 2 of the variation present a more complex pattern. This begins, of course, with the C-B motive of measure 33, now placed an octave higher, but the path that the line traverses includes, first, G and D (Tambourmajor and Wozzeck as “Mensch”)—the lowest pitches in the cadential chord (8-24) at the end of each act—then the “appoggiatura” figure F♭-E, representing the Kind and Wozzeck in relation to the Kind. The final three components of the descant are B♭, B, and C, each referring to Marie, as indicated in the Legend, and com-

34 No effort is made here to illustrate every one of the fixed pitch-class references. Readers familiar with the work of Perle, Schmalfeldt, and Jarman—as well as with that of earlier writers on Wozzeck—will recognize some, but not all, of these assignments.

35 The motive D-E, which combines Wozzeck as Mensch (D) with Wozzeck in relation to the Kind (E), forms the “Der Mann” motive in 1:4:56 that begins the final part of that scene. Note that E is in the tritone relation to B♭, the Lullaby pitch class, whose referent is Marie’s relation to the Kind.
prising the chromatic trichord 3-1, which, together with all direct chromatic formations in the opera, always refers to the murder of Marie, to her fear, and, specifically, to the murder weapon.

In Part 1 of the variation two pitches are highlighted in Example 2d, A♭ and D♭, the first a reference to the Doktor (in tritonal opposition to Wozzeck's D), the second emblematic of Wozzeck's submission to the Hauptmann. (For the association of A♭ with the Doktor, another pairing that may be unfamiliar to the reader, see I₄:488, 581, and, especially, I₄:628-30. A♭ is, of course, a component of the fixe Idee trichord, I₄:566-67, where, as is often the case, it accompanies Wozzeck's D.) It is interesting to note that D♭ arises here in a quasi-traditional voice-leading situation as 5-6 above the bass F, thus arising from C, Marie's pitch class. Even more to the point is the fact (commented upon above) that D♭ coincides temporally with the special pitch B in the descant, which is also the result (in tonic terms) of a voice-leading motion. In the motivic domain the bass "passing note" E♭ assumes special significance because the pitch class to which it belongs represents Wozzeck's submission to the Doktor. Together with D♭, A♭, and F it forms 4-14, replicating the melodic motive beamed in Examples 2c and 2d. The final bass note of Part 1 of the variation is F♯, representing the pitch class emblematic of the Kind [III₅:373], and the only occurrence of this pitch class at the middleground level except for its appearance in the "appoggiatura" figure of the descant in measure 39.

The bass progression of Part 2 of the variation is particularly interesting when interpreted with reference to fixed pitch-class motives. Whereas in the tonal analysis it was read as applied dominant (G) to the dominant (C), leading to the tonic F, and whereas in the pitch-class set frame of associations it unfolds set class 3-9 (hence refers to the seduction of Marie), here its specific pitch-class constituents denote, in turn, the Tambourmajor, Marie, and Wozzeck's fate.

This brief introduction to the role of fixed pitch classes in Wozzeck leads naturally to a consideration of the dramatic significance of the F-minor tonality of Variation 5, a matter broached at the beginning of this essay. Although the composer may have had other, more recondite reasons for selecting this tonality, it seems very likely, in view of his demonstrated predilection for the association of pitch class and persona, that the F-minor key derives its meaning from the tonic F-minor triad, which represents the dramatic constellation Marie (C), the Doktor (A♭), and Wozzeck's fate (F). In this trimorphic arrangement the A♭ of the Doktor appears to stand for the forces arrayed against Wozzeck that ultimately bring him to his

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A lucid example of this symbolic function of E♭/D♯ is given in I₄:642-55.
doom, forces personified in the opera primarily by the Hauptmann and the Doktor.

In the larger and more dynamic sense, however, the tonality of the variation is not equivalent to the tonic triad, but is expressed through the succession of pitch-class motives that forms an elaborate, quasi-cinematic montage that unfolds over its entire span. This view suggests the synthesis mentioned near the beginning of this essay: the main structural pillars of the variation are tonal, as shown in the analytical graphs of Examples 2a and 2b, while the foreground and middleground are a composite of atonal and tonal elements, with precedence at the middleground level given to the tonal voice-leading structures.

Conclusion

This essay may have raised more questions than it has answered. Among these, perhaps the most significant is the question of structural levels. Do leveled structures exist in other parts of Wozzeck? Are other works of Berg susceptible to this kind of analytical treatment? Are there large-scale motions that might be called tonal, in some sense yet to be defined, in Wozzeck and in the composer’s other atonal compositions? Whatever might be the answers to these and other important questions, it seems clear that the last word on Berg’s magnificent music has yet to be written.

37 As part of a book in progress I have completed a study of the Symphonic Interlude at the end of III4 that utilizes reduction techniques similar to those presented in this essay. From this additional experience, I suggest that the answer to the question is yes.